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ABSTRACT

Eight tables, accompanied by brief textual information, present facts from 1985 to 1990 about the school experiences of youth with disabilities. The tables focus on: (1) enrollment in regular education courses by students with 11 types of disabilities attending regular secondary schools; (2) services received by secondary students with disabilities, by disability and type of service; (3) average per-pupil expenditures for special education programs by disability and program type; (4) number and percentage of disabled students ages 16-21 exiting the educational system, by disability and basis of exit; (5) postsecondary education participation of special education exiters; (6) mean American College Testing scores for high school students with disabilities requiring special testing; (7) factors associated with dropping out of secondary school for youth with disabilities; and (8) parental reports of reasons why adolescents drop out of secondary schools. The text and tables indicate that almost half of special education students receive additional services other than basic special education and that the total cost of educating a pupil in a self-contained program is 2.5 times the cost of educating a regular education pupil, while the cost of educating students in resource programs is 1.9 times that of a regular pupil. (JDD)

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Education Facts

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A project of the Society for Adolescent Medicine and the Adolescent Health Program

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TABLE 1:

The school environment is an important factor in understanding the school experiences of youth with disabilities. Significant variation in placement patterns exists across handicapping conditions. Students with learning disabilities or speech impairments were served primarily in regular classes or resource rooms (77% or 92% respectively). Nationally, 56% of the students with mental retardation were placed in separate classes.

Most youth with disabilities (89%) attended comprehensive secondary schools whose student bodies were primarily students without disabilities. Overall, 28% of youth with disabilities attended school with fewer than 500 students; 39% attended schools between 500 and 1100 students and about 33% attended schools with more than 1100 students.

Table 1

Enrollment in Regular Education Courses by Students with Disabilities Attending Regular Secondary Schools
(Age Group 13-23 in 1985-1986)

	PRIMARY DISABILITY CATEGORY											
	Total	Learning Disabled	Emotionally Disturbed	Mentally Retarded	Speech Impaired	Visually Impaired	Hard of Hearing	Deaf	Deaf/ Blind	Ortho-pedically Impaired	Health Impaired	Multiply Handi-capped
Percentage of youth enrolled in:												
No Regular education classes	16.9	9.5	18.3	31.9	12.1	15.9	11.5	34.2	72.5	28.1	27.1	69.1
Regular education for nonacademic courses only	24.0	20.0	16.6	41.6	9.4	6.3	23.5	19.6	25.5	13.9	10.5	10.0
Some regular education courses (subjects unknown)	5.7	6.3	4.8	4.6	7.1	3.0	5.7	2.8	0.0	6.8	3.1	8.6
Regular education for academic courses	44.1	54.1	47.9	19.6	45.1	49.9	50.0	39.8	0.0	36.6	33.5	10.1
All regular education classes	9.3	10.2	12.4	2.3	26.4	28.9	9.2	3.6	2.1	14.6	25.8	2.1
No. of Respondents	**5170**	**872**	**503**	**828**	**405**	**425**	**543**	**410**	**22**	**509**	**287**	**366**

Using a 2-tailed test, the sampling errors at the 95% confidence level for the full sample range is from ± .6% to ±1.4%. For disability categories, the range is from ±2% to ±5% for most categories. For the deaf/blind category, the range is up to ±19%.

Source: Educational Programs and Achievements of Secondary Special Education Students: Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study. March, 1989. Mary Wagner, Ph.D. and Debra M. Shaver. Based on students' most recent school year.

TABLE 2:

Schools provide a wide variety of services which enable students to learn in the classroom. Overall, slightly over half (52.8%) of the special education students did not receive additional services other than the basic special education services, although this figure varies markedly by type of disability.

Table 2
Services Received by Secondary Students with Disabilities
(Age Group 13-23 in 1986-87)

	PRIMARY DISABILITY CATEGORY											
	Total	Learning Disabled	Emotionally Disturbed	Mentally Retarded	Speech Impaired	Visually Impaired	Hard of Hearing	Deaf	Deaf/ Blind	Ortho-pedically Impaired	Health Impaired	Multiply Handi-capped
Percentage of youth *receiving* in the past year from or through their school:												
No additional services	52.8	61.0	54.3	40.0	43.4	39.6	30.1	26.0	30.4	32.6	44.0	16.7
Speech or language therapy	16.5	9.6	6.4	27.8	44.6	10.6	50.2	56.5	25.8	20.1	15.9	57.6
Personal counseling or therapy	14.6	12.1	31.0	13.7	5.1	15.9	13.8	27.4	14.2	13.6	14.7	23.0
Occupational therapy or life skills training	22.8	17.0	15.5	36.9	16.6	32.1	20.9	39.1	41.0	34.1	27.7	53.3
Help from tutor/ reader/ interpreter	13.0	13.9	9.3	10.8	6.9	23.6	32.9	45.1	22.8	15.5	15.4	12.8
Physical therapy/ mobility training	4.9	2.0	1.8	9.5	1.4	18.0	3.4	8.7	32.2	35.4	10.3	32.6
Hearing loss therapy	1.2	0.0	0.2	1.0	1.0	2.2	41.6	52.7	54.1	0.6	1.1	6.1
Help in getting or using transportation	9.5	2.0	6.2	22.4	3.7	31.1	21.1	24.9	41.8	45.4	19.1	55.5
No. of respondents	**8169**	**1152**	**762**	**1165**	**573**	**850**	**748**	**893**	**98**	**748**	**460**	**722**

Using a 2-tailed test, sampling errors at the 95% confidence level for the full sample are ±1% or lower. For disability categories, they range from below ±1% to ±5%.

Source: Educational Programs and Achievements of Secondary Special Education Students: Findings from the National Longitudinal Transition Study, March, 1989. Prepared by Mary Wagner, Ph.D., and Debra M. Shaver. Based on parent reports or student school records.

TABLE 3:

These data provide nationally representative estimates of the per-pupil expense of educating students with disabilities. The total cost of educating a child with disabilities in a self-contained program is 2.5 times the cost of educating a regular education pupil. The costs below reflect only special education services, not additional regular education services.

The total cost of educating a pupil in resource programs is about $1,700.00 less than educating students in self-contained classes and about 1.9 times the cost of educating a regular education pupil. Sixty-eight percent of pupils in special education received their instruction through resource programs. Preliminary analyses do not indicate significant differences between elementary and high school costs.

Table 3

Average (Weighted) Per-Pupil Expenditures for Special Education Programs by Individual Handicapping Conditions and Program Type* (1985-86) (Age Group 6-21)

Condition	Program Type (per pupil expenditures)	
	Self-Contained (more than 15 hours/week)	Resource (less than 15 hours/week)
Learning Disabled	$3,083.00	$1,843.00
Autistic	7,582.00	NA**
Seriously Emotionally Disturbed	4,857.00	2,820.00
Mentally Retarded	4,754.00	2,290.00
Speech Impaired	7,140.00	847.00
Visually Impaired	6,181.00	3,396.00
Hard of Hearing	6,058.00	3,372.00
Deaf	7,988.00	NA**
Deaf-Blind	20,416. 00	NA**
Orthopedically Impaired	5,248.00	3,999.00
Other Health Impaired	4,782.00	NA**
Multihandicapped	6,874.00	NA**
Non-Categorical	3,684.00	1,731.00

*Sample size and standard error vary by condition and program type.
**Not available.

Source: Moore, M.T., Strang, E.W., Schwartz, M., and Braddock, M. (1988). *Patterns in special education service delivery and cost.* Washington, D.C.: Decision Resources Corp.

TABLE 4:

Research indicates that special education students drop out of school at a higher rate than the regular education population. Concern for high school dropouts is predicated on a belief that leaving high school before graduation is harmful for the individual and for the society. While some studies indicate that not all dropouts are behind in school or have substandard test scores, and that some at least have an equal or greater sense of self-esteem and control than high school graduates, most evidence supports the understanding that dropping out has negative personal and social consequences.

The major consequence of dropping out of school for youth with disabilities include poor employment potential, fewer opportunities for further education, and lower wage earnings for those employed.

Table 4

Number and Percentage of Handicapped Students 18–21 Years Old Exiting the Educational System, by Handicap and by Basis of Exit

U.S. and Insular Areas
During the 1986–87 School Year

	Graduated with Diploma		Graduated with Certificate		Reached Maximum Age for Services		Dropped Out		Other Basis of Exit		Total Exiting the System	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All conditions	98,210	45.9	27,355	13.1	5,351	2.5	52,571	25.1	27,955	13.3*	209,442	100.00
Learning disabled	53,713	54.5	10,016	10.2	1,012	1.0	25,728	26.1	8,015	8.1	98,484	100.00
Emotionally disturbed	10,537	37.0	1,757	6.2	594	2.1	11,942	42.0	3,620	12.7	28,450	100.00
Mentally retarded	19,104	38.6	12,080	24.4	2,787	5.6	10,214	20.7	5,284	10.7	49,469	100.00
Speech impaired	4,967	48.6	906	8.9	262	2.6	1,929	18.9	2,155	21.1	10,219	100.00
Visually impaired	782	63.7	133	10.8	28	2.3	151	12.3	134	10.9	1,228	100.00
Hard of hearing & deaf	2,378	59.8	843	21.1	75	1.9	391	9.8	302	7.8	3,987	100.00
Deaf-blind	108	46.7	57	24.7	34	14.7	13	5.6	19	8.2	231	100.00
Orthopedically handicapped	2,214	45.9	460	9.5	56	1.2	1,140	23.6	953	19.8	4,823	100.00
Other health impaired	999	45.1	379	17.1	65	2.9	367	16.5	407	18.4	2,217	100.00
Multihandicapped	1,410	13.8	724	7.0	438	4.2	698	6.7	7,068	68.4	10,334	100.00

Source: OSEP State-Reported Data. Produced by Ed/SEP Data Analysis System (DANS) October 1, 1988.

*Initially, schools report these students dropped out. Subsequently, 85% of parents report, students had other reasons.

TABLE 5:

Two common paths open to youth in the early years out of secondary school involve pursuing post-secondary education or training, or securing employment. Fewer students with disabilities than students without disabilities attend post-secondary education schools/programs.

Table 5

Postsecondary Education Participation of Special Education Exiters

	Percentage of 1985–1986 Exiters Taking Courses From:				
Disability Category	Any Post-secondary Institution	Vocational or Trade School	2-Year College	4-Year College	Sample Size
All conditions	14.8	8.1	5.9	2.1	1285
Learning disabled	16.7	9.8	6.9	1.8	245
Emotionally disturbed	11.7	8.8	4.1	1.3	131
Mentally retarded	5.8	4.3	1.2	.8	184
Speech impaired	29.3	7.0	19.3	8.3	83
Visually impaired	42.1	2.9	15.2	27.5	110
Deaf	36.5	7.0	19.0	15.2	154
Hard of hearing	30.1	11.8	12.7	7.0	101
Orthopedically impaired	28.0	9.0	10.4	9.5	108
Health impaired	30.7	13.2	12.1	7.6	65
Multiply handicapped	3.8	.9	4.0	.2	77
Deaf/blind	8.3	8.8	0.0	0.0	27

Sampling errors for all conditions are <±1%. For disability categories, sampling errors range from ±1% to ±5%.

Source: OSEP National Longitudinal Study, SRI International, December, 1988. From the 11th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act. Based on parent reports.

TABLE 6:

Although mean ACT composite scores for specially tested students with disabilities are lower than normative data, the differences in several cases are minimal. Differences exist by type of disability and reflect a continuing need for schools to address issues related to the preparation of students with disabilities for postsecondary education.

Table 6

Mean ACT Scores for High School Students with Disabilities Requiring Special Testing: 1989–1990

	Normative Data	Deaf	Dyslexic	Learning Disability	Visual Disability	Physical Disability
Mean ACT Scores Composite	20.6	16.4	17.8	16.4	19.7	18.9

TABLE 7:

National Longitudinal Transition Study data show that socioeconomic status, as measured by income and head of household's education, is an important correlate of dropping out of school for all students.

Table 7

Factors Associated With Dropping Out of Secondary School for Youth with Disabilities
1985–1986 1986–1987

Individual/Family Characteristics	Percentage of Exiters Who Dropped Out
Gender	
Male	38
Female	34
Urbanicity	
Urban	40
Suburban	29
Rural	36
Ethnicity	
White	34
Black	36
Hispanic	44
Other	23
Household Income	
<$12,000 per year	42
$12,000 to $25,000 per year	36
>$25,000 per year	20
Head of Household Education	
Not a high school graduate	44
High school graduate	27
Some college courses or 2-year college degree	28
College degree or more (graduate courses, graduate degree)	18

Source: OSEP National Longitudinal Transition Study, SRI International, December, 1988. From the 11th Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of the Handicapped Act. Based on parent reports.

TABLE 8:

Just as there is variation by disability in the percentage of students dropping out, so too are there differences in reasons for dropping out. Recent research suggests that school practice or culture, such as the structural organization of schools, the establishment of a social bond between students, and the norms governing the institution, may influence the decision to drop out or stay in school.

Table 8

Parental Reports of Reasons Why Adolescents Drop Out of Secondary School (1985-86)

	Primary Handicapping Condition											
Reason For Dropping Out (percents)	Total	Learning Disabled	Emotionally Disturbed	Mentally Retarded	Speech Impaired	Visually Impaired	Hard of Hearing	Deaf	Deaf/ Blind	Ortho-pedically Impaired	Health Impaired	Multiply handi-capped
Pregnancy/ childbearing	7.8	8.9	5.8	6.7	0.0	24.0	34.2	15.4	a/	0.0	2.0	0.0
Poor grades, not doing well in school	28.1	32.7	19.1	26.3	30.0	15.7	12.8	11.3	a/	15.8	8.9	0.0
Wanting/needing a job	9.4	10.9	5.0	12.0	0.0	0.0	7.0	.0	a/	0.0	0.0	0.0
Moving	1.2	0.0	.7	5.5	10.0	0.0	1.5	2.8	a/	4.2	4.2	0.0
Didn't like school	30.4	31.2	32.3	24.9	41.7	29.9	25.8	38.8	a/	21.5	19.8	17.9
Illness/disability	5.2	2.8	6.9	7.7	4.2	16. 4	13.3	3.5	a/	32.7	49.1	39.8
Behavioral problems	16.6	14.4	26.8	13.6	12.1	0.0	3.3	2.6	a/	0.0	4.9	4.4
Didn't get program youth wanted	3.3	5.0	1.2	0.0	0.0	5.3	3.8	2.8	a/	0.0	0.0	10.3
Other	33.4	38.9	28.0	19.3	40.8	17.2	29.1	40.9	a/	34. 4	18.5	50.3
Number of respondents	363	88	92	44	19	14	24	20	2	21	18	23

a/ Numbers too few to report.

Source: Dropouts: The Relationship of Student Characteristics, Behaviors and Performance for Special Education Students. March, 1989. Paul Butler-Nalin, Ph.D. and Christine Padilla

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